

## Kosmas outlines plans for her term

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One of Brevard County's two freshmen representatives in Congress visited FLORIDA TODAY last week and discussed the future of Kennedy Space Center, assistance for veterans, health care reform and her first 100 days in Congress. U.S. Rep. Suzanne Kosmas, D-New Smyrna Beach — whose district includes North Brevard County — said her years in the Florida Legislature prepared her for the issues and people she is dealing with now.

The biggest challenge, she said, is finding time to work on all the things she'd like to accomplish. "Having served eight years in the (Florida) Legislature, it's not like it's totally new, and the issues are not totally new, either," she said. "We dealt with education. We dealt with health care, jobs and the economy. The issues are familiar."

Here is how she weighed in on some issues important to Brevard County:

### Space

Kosmas said, first and foremost in every major conversation she has had in Washington, D.C., is the future of Kennedy Space Center, including direct conversations with President Barack Obama.

"It is a very strong focus for me for many reasons. The most obvious at this date and time is the job situation and the effort to reduce or minimize the gap between the shuttle program and the advent of the Constellation program.

"Anything that can be done to minimize that gap is something that I am focused on. What I'm most concerned about, frankly, is the safety factor that an arbitrary cutoff date creates. The negativity in my mind of saying September 2010 is the last time the shuttle will fly, especially when we in the community know how vulnerable they are to weather and other safety factors that just don't put you in a situation where it makes good common sense to say we will not fly another one after a hard-and-fast date.

"I've said to the president on several occasions we need a NASA administrator to be appointed, and we need one that, hopefully, will be a proponent of human spaceflight exploration."

## Post-shuttle jobs

Kosmas said she has worked to identify places appropriate for alternative energy businesses to start up or relocate to.

"We are working with several companies in trying to help them grow their businesses or get started here in this district. Some of them are below the radar screen right now because they are working on things right now that they don't particularly want revealed. But we are working very hard to try and get some companies started in that regard."

## Veterans funding

Kosmas lauded President Obama's plan to integrate Department of Defense records with the Department of Veterans Affairs, saying it should translate into more money for VA health initiatives. She also said attention would be paid to issues unique to soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I think I have been able to really jump on things that are very important to me, like veterans' issues. I'm pleased that the administration and the leadership also are on the same sheet of music about making sure that they are cared for. (Included are) specific directives with regard to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, particularly making sure that the mental problems and others are considered part of the care they deserve."

## Health care reform

Kosmas said the health care plan in Washington is evolving, but points to money earmarked for innovations in information-sharing that will ultimately lead to better health care for all.

"In the Recovery and Reinvestment Act, there's \$19 billion set aside for health information technology that is a recognition and understanding of the magnitude of the goal of providing health care to everyone that is affordable and accessible.

"There is no question that people will get better health care if those records are connected in a way that doctors and hospitals and pathology and others can talk with each other essentially